

2012

Culture and Communications

LOYC 340/2

Loyola College for Diversity and Sustainability

Instructor: Philip Szporer

Room: CC-301

Tuesday, Thursday, 10:15-11:30 a.m.

Office Hours: by appointment, on Tuesdays, prior to class (location: AD 505)

email: philip.szporer@gmail.com

Objectives

Transformations can come about in an artist's work as a result of political, social and economic engagement. The course starts with this simple but important point about the relationship of culture and communication, and examines what it means to be an engaged artist.

We will look at how several artists, from Canada and beyond, have imagined, represented, and theorized the notion of culture and communication. How has the stage, for instance, served as a place of conflict, struggle and resistance? To what extent can the site of performance or exhibition be a place of idealism, and what is the separation between the desire and the ability to transcend borders and open minds? Are artists responsible for the effect of what they create, regardless of their intentions? Furthermore, is there a particular effect that culture is likely to achieve, whether affirmative or adversarial? These are some of the questions that we shall explore with the goal of understanding how dance, theater, music, the visual arts, literature and film can be used to express both individual and collective consciousness.

Emphasis is placed on the shifting relationship between culture and communication, particularly on issues of gender, ethics, class, and ethnicity.

Course Text(s)

See articles and chapters that are posted on the Course Reserves list -

<http://clues.concordia.ca/search/r> (then type in the course number, LOYC 340, and navigate to the selections listed under my name, "Philip Szporer"). There will be no course text to purchase for this class. Over the duration of the term I may add some selections to this list.

Course Requirements

Throughout the course, students will be challenged to articulate their own critical analysis through active discussion and written assignments, as well as a group oral presentation. Students will be responding to readings and video excerpts of material gleaned from performances, films, exhibitions, and writings. Written assignments are based upon individual research work concerning the material at hand.

It is essential that students come to class prepared to discuss the readings, which they have read closely.

Workload:

There will be two response essays to the readings/class discussion; Moodle site-based reactions to critical questions in the readings; an oral group presentation; and a final paper (8-10 pages) to conclude the term.

• Details about the assignments:**Moodle entries**

Prior every Tuesday class, students will enter one reaction (about one paragraph) on the course Moodle site, based on the readings for that week. The substance of the entry may compare the readings, or may focus in on one particular issue. The process of writing in this manner will help students process the material, and will ensure that they are well prepared for the class discussion.

Response essays

The response essays or commentary (500 words maximum) on the required readings is designed to focus attention on the key issues in the particular readings and to provide a vehicle for clarifying questions and comments for further discussion. It may be written as a series of comments, meditations or personal reflections on the readings. Typed, doubled-spaced (reasonable font size). No bibliography or footnotes required, unless warranted.

Due: September 20, October 23

Group Oral Presentation Guidelines

The oral presentations (with four or five students per group) will be structured in order to give an overview of one reading, film, art exhibition or performance, indicate what the author/artist is writing/expressing for or against, connect the reading/film/exhibition/performance to the substance of the lectures, and pose questions to the group designed to spark sustained dialogue among students.

***Students or a representative from each group are required to briefly meet with the instructor during week 4 (September 25 or 27) to identify project topics. Parameters for the projects will be discussed in class during week 1 or 2. A written project proposal of one to two paragraphs will be turned in week 5 (October 2).

Group work is a very important part of many university courses, and the nature of the work world today increasingly requires individuals to have problem-solving and team-building skills. What can we learn about subjects by considering them together that we cannot learn by considering them on our own?

In this assignment, every member of the group should participate. Please keep in mind two principles: You are here i) to learn, and ii) be respectful of other points of view.

For the presentation, think about how you are going to divide the time allocated for your group. (Hint: Don't spend ten minutes on your introduction!)

What information can you present that will convey the significance of your subjects' intellectual and creative contributions efficiently and effectively? Do you want to concentrate on a single work, moment, and idea? Do you want to narrate a life story? Do you want to incorporate a story about the cultural community to which your subject belonged?

Consider the format of your presentation. Do you want to project illustrations? How can brief audio or video clips make important points?

In consultation with the instructor, you will prepare a **twenty-minute (20) presentation** on an agreed topic. You may wish to speak either from notes or from a fully articulated text but either way you must bear the time limit in mind and be as succinct as possible in your handling of your material. More detail (e.g. quotations from set texts or from critics, dates, etc.) can be included in a handout or in the ensuing discussion.

Your final task as presenter is to generate discussion. Prepare yourself for likely questions. Given the brief nature of the presentation simply ask students to interject only if absolutely necessary, instead making a note of questions to ask at the end, thereby facilitating the discussion process.

Checklist

- The better the presentation and discussion, the better the learning outcome for everybody.
- Be imaginative where possible by using visual aids, projections, slides, handouts, even performance, again bearing in mind the constraints of time and ensuring that your material is directly relevant, illuminating, well-illustrated, and not merely decorative. The main points of your argument should be clearly expressed, and the structure of your presentation coherent and logical.
- The aim of the exercise is for students to research a topic and then communicate effectively the results of their work. Consequently it is important to consider both the quality of content and of presentation. I will consider both when arriving at a mark. Groups must hand in a version of their presentation (in full or in note form) immediately after the event.
- Group oral presentations must be in English.

Research paper

Students will complete a major research paper over the course of the term considering the social, cultural, political and the aesthetic shift realized through an artist's and/or a group's efforts, or conversely how socio-political, economic and cultural forces impacted their work.

Students are required to submit a written project proposal of one to two paragraphs, to be turned in week 9 (Nov. 1), at the latest. The final 8-page paper (approx. 4000 words) will be handed in at the beginning of the last class (Nov. 29).

Papers must be original, in that they will be written specifically for this course, clearly organized, and should articulate a coherent theme or argument and use appropriate evidence to support their case. They must use the appropriate scholarly literature and academic sources, especially journal articles, in the relevant fields. Papers will be correctly and completely referenced, using any one of the standard reference or footnoting styles. Each of these factors will be taken into consideration in evaluating the paper that is due in the final class.

Policy for Writing Evaluation: Students are evaluated on their mastery of language arts skills. To receive the best grade, you must

- Demonstrate maturity and originality of thought reflected by the ability to analyze, synthesize and evaluate.
- Sustain the development of a point or idea over the length of the assignment.
- Use organized paragraphs and transitional devices.
- Make conventional use of capitalization and punctuation.
- Use consistently the grammar, syntax and spelling of standard English or French, with particular attention to sentence structure and to agreement between subjects, verbs, pronouns and antecedents.

Assignments may be written in French or English. Papers must be typed, double-spaced, with a clear font size, paginated, and include your name, a title, as well as proper citations/references (MLA or Turabian, for instance), bibliography, filmography, and videography. Grades are based on clarity of expression, observational, descriptive, and analytic skills, research methods, references, footnotes and bibliography.

All assignments must be handed in hard copy, and not sent via e-mail. E-mailed assignments will only be accepted in cases of grave illness or circumstance.

Grading Breakdown

Active participation/Attendance	10%
Moodle entries	15%
Oral presentation	15%
Response paper (2)	15% each
Final paper (due final week)	25%
Final paper proposal (due week 5)	5%

Attendance/Participation

Attendance will be recorded at the beginning of every class. No more than two justifiable absences will be allowed. Students will be expected to participate actively in class discussions. If you miss one class, your attendance/participation mark will automatically decrease 5%, two absences 10%. Exceptions: if you have a justified absence or a bona fide documented emergency (for example, illness, injury,

hospitalization) Please advise early in the term if you are observing religious holidays. Personal travel is not an acceptable reason.

Students are expected to participate actively in critical class discussions based on readings, lectures, conceptual and image research, and screenings. Here is a rough guide that will help you understand how you will be assessed for your participation grade:

- If you attend class every week and say little or nothing: 0-4
- If you attend class every week and speak, but you never do more than regurgitate the course lectures, or voice your personal opinions: 4-7
- If you attend class every week and engage in discussion, listen attentively, and what you have to say is demonstrably informed by the course readings and discussions: 8-10

Lateness policy

Please note that it is exceedingly disruptive to arrive late to class, and students who do so will be marked as absent. Likewise, **students who leave early without reason or who skip parts of the lecture will be marked as absent.** If there are reasonable grounds to be absent for part of the class, please advise me of your situation; it is your responsibility to take the necessary measures to arrive on campus early enough. At all events, if you do end up arriving late to the lecture, or if your body demands that you leave the room temporarily, please try to be as discrete as possible in order not to disturb your fellow students. Do this by holding the door gently as it closes rather than letting it bang shut on its own.

Late work is not encouraged. If you have a valid reason for postponing assignment submissions, such as a death in the family or a serious illness, please contact me (or the Department Assistant), and we'll arrange a reasonable alternative. Otherwise, a point will be deducted for each day the paper is late (i.e., 1 or 2 points).

Plagiarism

The most common offense under the Academic Code of Conduct is plagiarism, which the Code defines as **"the presentation of the work of another person as one's own or without proper acknowledgement"** (Article 16^a).

This could be material copied word for word from books, journals, Internet sites, professor's course notes, etc. It could be material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It could be the work of a fellow student, for example, an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, a paper or assignment completed by another student. It might be a paper purchased through one of the many available sources. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone - it can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. "Presentation" is not limited to written work. It also includes oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. If you translate the work of another person into French or English and do not cite the

source, this is also plagiarism. If you cite your own work without the correct citation, this too is plagiarism.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty and to ensure you avoid committing any offenses by reading the University's Academic Code of Conduct, available at the following sites:

http://web2.concordia.ca/Legal_Counsel/policies/english/AC/Code.html
<http://secretariat.concordia.ca/policies/academic/en/AcademicCodeConduct2008.pdf>

Other Course Policies

Language: The language of instruction is English. You may submit your written work in French; however, my comments on your papers will normally be in English.

Electronic Equipment: Turn off and put away all electronic devices, i.e., mobile phones, iPods, PDAs, Blackberries, videogames, etc., unless the instructor grants you an exemption from this policy. Students breaching this policy during the lecture will be penalized on their participation grades, including a possible grade of zero for participation, at the discretion of the course instructor. Please take this warning seriously; this class is **not** the place to check Facebook, surf, text-message friends, or engage in other distracting and disruptive behaviour with electronic devices. Save it for after class or during the break. If there is a legitimate reason you must leave your mobile phone on, please notify me in advance, put the phone on vibrate mode, and sit in the front row on the aisle so you can easily depart the class to take your urgent call.

Laptop computers are acceptable for note-taking alone, and not for any other purpose.

Food: No eating in class. If you are hungry or thirsty, take care of your needs before the session.

Chatting in class: Please refrain from chatting with your neighbours, out of respect for the other students and the professor. Such chatter is distracting, so please save your conversation until the class is over.

Campus Resources

Students with Disabilities: Any student with a documented disability (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the professor and the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities at the beginning of the semester.

<http://supportservices.concordia.ca/disabilities/>

Student Learning Services: Will help to improve your academic skills and learning potential (including writing skills and note-taking). <http://learning.concordia.ca/>

Weekly topics and readings:

- N.B. Readings subject to change.
- In the event of major course disruptions or a large influx of new students into the course, it could become necessary to reallocate or redesign course assignments. If this occurs, every effort will be made to find equivalent evaluation criteria with any new or existing assignments.

Week 1 - Sept. 6

Introduction to course and syllabus.

Concepts such as the body, performance, culture, ethnicity, race, movement will be discussed in a general sense. Come with your own understanding of these and related terms and share your thoughts.

Week 2 - September 11, 13

Making Art

Reading:

Cynthia Freeland, "Blood and Beauty" in *But Is It Art? An Introduction to Art Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 1-29.

Week 3 - September 18, 20

*****Tuesday, September 18, 2012**

- Deadline for withdrawal with tuition refund from two-term and fall-term courses.

The Body

Readings:

Alan Peterson, "The Body in Question: An Introduction", in *The Body in Question: A Socio-cultural Approach* (Abingdon, Oxon: New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 1-19.

Helen Thomas, "The Body in Culture: the Body Project" in *The Body, Dance and Cultural Theory* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 34-63.

Response essay #1 due (September 20).

Week 4 - September 25, 27

Identity and Representation

Readings:

bell hooks, "artistic integrity: race and accountability," in *reel to real: race, sex, and class at the movies* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 69 – 76.

John Lahr, "Under the Skin," *New Yorker* 28 June 1993 (Vol. 69 Issue 19), 90-93.

Sept. 25 and 27: Meetings re Oral Presentations (book session with instructor during office hours prior to or after class).

Week 5 - October 2, 4

Cultural appropriation

Readings:

Craig Owens, "Representation, Appropriation and Power," in *Beyond recognition: representation, power, and culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 88-113.

Stephen Godfrey, "Cultural Appropriation in Dance," *Step Text*, Vol. 2, no. 2 (March 1993), 16.

Rosemary Coombe, "The Properties of Culture and the Politics of Possessing Identity: Native Claims in the Cultural Appropriation Controversy," in *Canadian Journal of Law and Jurisprudence*, Vol. 6 No 2 (1993), 249 - 285.

October 2: Submit project proposals for Group Oral Presentation.

Week 6 - October 9, 11

October 9:

Day to meet and work independently on group projects and approaches.

October 11:

Multicultural identities I

Readings:

Trinh T. Minh-ha, "A Minute Too Long" in *When the Moon Waxes Red* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 107-116.

Shobana Jeyasingh, "Imaginary homelands: creating a new dance language" in *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*, ed. Alexandra Carter (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 46-53.

Week 7 - October 16, 18

Multicultural identities II

Readings:

Peter Brook, "The Culture of Links" in *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, ed. Patrice Pavis (London, New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 63-66.

David Williams, "Remembering the Others That Are Us" in *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, ed. Patrice Pavis (London, New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 67-78.

Week 8 - October 23, 25

Gender Identities

Readings:

"The Body You Want: Liz Kotz interviews Judith Butler," *Artforum*, Vol 31 No. 3 (November 1992), 82-89.

Diane Torr and Stephen Bottoms, "Drag and Self" in *Sex, Drag and Male Roles* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), pp. 195-221.

Response essay #2 due (October 23).

Week 9 - October 30, November 1

Ethics

Reading:

Arlene Croce, "Discussing the undiscussable," *Dance connection*, 13(2) (June/July/Aug. 1995), 20-28.

Week 10 - November 6, 8

Audience

Readings:

Adam Gopnik, "The Mindful Museum," *The Walrus*, June 4, 2007, 89.

Adam Gopnik, "The Death of an Audience," *The New Yorker*, October 5, 1992, 141-147.

Week 11 - November 13, 15

Group presentations

Week 12 - November 20, 22

Techno bodies and extreme engagement

Readings:

Ann Cooper Albright, "Techno Bodies: Muscling with Gender in Contemporary Dance" in *Choreographing Difference: The Body and Identity in Contemporary Dance* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1997), pp. 28-55.

Cathy MacGregor, "Bodies on the boundaries: subjectification and objectification in contemporary performance," in *Cultural Work: Understanding the Cultural Industries*, ed. Andrew Beck (London: Routledge), pp. 56-72.

Week 13 - November 27, 29

Transmission & Democracy

Readings:

Cynthia Freeland, "Digitizing and Disseminating", in *But Is It Art? An Introduction to Art Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 177-205.

Final paper due (November 29).

Week 14 - December 4 (make-up class)

TBA